

Global Environment Facility (GEF)

Basic Instrument

Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured Global Environment Facility (GEF). Participating countries initially approved the Instrument in March 1994 and most recently amended it at the Fourth GEF Assembly in 2010.

Implementing Legislation

No new implementing legislation needed. U.S. participation in the GEF is dependent on contributions from the Department of the Treasury to the GEF Trust Fund based on annual appropriations by Congress.

Member Nations

Currently, 183 member governments, including both recipient governments and donor governments, participate in the GEF. See www.thegef.org for a complete list.

Secretariat Headquarters

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Budget

Today, the GEF is the largest multilateral fund for projects that improve the global environment, and the U.S. has historically been the largest contributing member government. Since its establishment in 1991, the GEF has provided funds for more than 3,900 projects in more than 165 developing countries and countries with economies in transition. These grants amount to \$13.5 billion from the GEF alongside an additional \$65 billion in cofinancing. Through its Small Grants Programme (SGP), the GEF has also made more than 20,000 small grants directly to civil society and community based organizations, totaling \$1 billion.

U.S. Representation

The Department of the Treasury and the Department of State share the lead for the U.S. Government. NOAA Office of International Affairs represents the agency on an interagency team that reviews and comments on GEF project proposals. NOAA also often collaborates with implementing agencies to provide technical and capacity-building support to recipient countries on project activities.

Description

I. Mission/Purpose

The GEF is a global partnership between 183 countries and international institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector to address global environmental issues through the support and expansion of pre-existing national sustainable development initiatives in recipient countries. It provides grants for projects related to six focal areas: biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, the ozone layer, and persistent organic pollutants.

The GEF was established in October 1991 as a \$1 billion pilot program in the World Bank to assist in the protection of the global environment and to promote environmental sustainable development. The GEF set out to provide new and additional grants and concessional funding to cover the "incremental" or additional costs associated with transforming a project with national sustainable development benefits into one with global environmental benefits.

In 1994 at the Rio Earth Summit, the GEF was restructured and moved out of the World Bank system to become a permanent, independent institution.

As part of the restructuring, the GEF was entrusted to become the financial mechanism for both the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The GEF subsequently was also selected to serve as financial mechanism for three more international conventions: The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (2001), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (2003), and the Minamata Convention on Mercury (2013). The GEF also supports implementation of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer in countries with economies in transition.

The United Nations Development Program, the United Nations Environment Program and the World Bank were the three initial partners implementing GEF projects. Seven more agencies joined the GEF family over the years: The Food and Agriculture Organization; the Inter-American Development Bank; the United Nations Industrial Development Organization; the Asian Development Bank; the African Development Bank; the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

Marine issues:

Marine projects of interest to NMFS may be funded under either the biodiversity focal area or the international waters focal area. Coastal, marine, and freshwater ecosystems represent one of four operational programs in the biodiversity focal area, and the objective of the program is the conservation and sustainable use of biological resources in these ecosystems. Under the international waters focal area, the GEF has funded several large marine ecosystem projects, for which NOAA often provides in-kind technical and capacity-building assistance. The objective of international waters projects is to help governments collectively manage transboundary water resources. The GEF is showing increasing flexibility and breaking new ground both in types of projects and as a coordination mechanism between the UN, bilateral, and multilateral development bank assistance mechanisms. NOAA has only begun to utilize the many opportunities for collaboration and leverage that the GEF provides.

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